THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Progress is as follows :—

(i) EXPORT PROMOTION INDUSTRIAL PARKS (EPIP SCHEME)

As on date the Government of India have approved proposals from eleven State Governments to set up EPIPs. These are of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Kerala, U.P., Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat.

(ii) VISHAKHAPATNAM EXPORT PROCESSING ZONE (VEPZ)

The VEPZ has been operationalised with effect from 1-4-93 on completion of basic infrastructure facilities of the first phase covering an area of 163 acres. The total land area of the Zone is 360 acres. A total of 35 Nos. of plots for Gem and Jewellery and 38 Nos. for other industrial units have been developed in the first phase and construction of one SDF is in progress. Nine project proposals have been received so far for setting up units in the Zone, all of which have been approved.

(b) to (d) No problems have so far been reported by these State Governments in implementing the projects. These Schemes are progressing satisfactorily.

Foreign Newsprint Suppliers Hiking Prices of Newsprint

1766. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry of Commerce is aware that the foreign newsprint suppliers have hiked up the prices of newsprint all of a sudden, after Government decanalised the import of newsprint;

(b) whether it is a fact that the foreign newsprint manufacturers have appointed agents in India and the newspapers have to import the newsprint only through their agents;

(c) whether Government consider breaking this cartel which will not only affect the newspapers but also result in loss of foreign exchange; and

(d) whether Government will consider import of newsprint through State Trading Corporation?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) Under the Current Export and Import Policy, import of newsprint by actual users is permitted on the basis of entitlement certificate issued by the Registrar of Newspaper of India. The eligible importers are free to source their newsprint supplies from foreign markets on best possible terms. Presently, there is no proposal under consideration to canalise the imports of Newsprint through S. T. C.

Import of Newsprint by STC

1767. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that STC is importing newsprint even after decanalisation of import of newsprint;

(b) if not, whether the STC will consider import of newsprint at a competitive rate for the medium and small newspapers; and

(c) what is the landed cost per ton and the rate at which STC sells newsprint to small and medium Newspapers?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Prior to 1-4-1992, STC had been the canalising agency for import of newsprint. However, w.e.f. 1-4-92, import of newsprint has been decanalised and STC is no longer a canalising agency for import of this commodity. Under the decanalised regime, actual users are allowed to import newsprint directly by themselves or through newsprint handling agents based on the entitlement certificates issued by the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) under the administrative control of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. As an agent of actual users, STC has contracted newsprint for import. About 22,000 MTs of newsprint were imported by STC during the year 1992-93 against which a quantity of 20,000 MTs had arrived during same year and the balance quantity of 2,000 MTs arrived during 1993-94. During the year 1993-94, STC had also imported 21,000 MTs (approx), newsprint from Russia against a specific licence issued by Directorate General of Foreign Trade for sale to the actual users against their valid certificates of entitlement.

(c) The weighted average landed cost and the weighed average sale price PMT of the standard newsprint imported by